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Enhanced cooperation and policy and programme coordination, including the provision of further guidance to the Collaborative Partnership on Forests

Collaborative Partnership on Forests Framework 2008 and 2009

Information document

Summary

The present report provides a summary of the joint and collaborative activities undertaken by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) in 2007 and 2008. The important contributions of the Partnership have been recognized in recent United Nations Forum on Forests resolutions and decisions. The non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests calls for further support to CPF to develop and implement joint initiatives, while the Forum's multi-year programme of work for the period 2007-2015 calls upon CPF to develop synergies and explore possibilities for joint activities to achieve sustainable forest management, the global objectives on forests and implementation of the forest instrument.

Since the previous report (E/CN.18/2007/6), the Partnership has embarked on new joint initiatives on financing for sustainable forest management, forests and climate change and forest degradation. CPF is also continuing to develop and expand existing joint initiatives relating to the Sourcebook on Funding for Sustainable Forest Management; global forest expert panels; the streamlining of forest-related reporting;

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a global forest information service; and the Partnership website. CPF members also continue to engage in other collaborative activities related to improving forest governance and law enforcement; research in forest landscape mosaics; monitoring, assessment and reporting; forest landscape restoration and rehabilitation of degraded lands; public communication and outreach; and forestry education.

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I. Introduction

1. The Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) is an informal, voluntary arrangement among 14 international organizations, institutions and secretariats with substantial programmes on forests.[1] It was established to enhance cooperation and coordination among its members on forest-related issues. In this regard, it supports the work of the United Nations Forum on Forests, in particular country efforts to achieve sustainable forest management. The Partnership meets regularly to share experiences, discuss emerging issues and develop joint initiatives to address areas of mutual concern. Building on each of their comparative advantages and institutional strengths, CPF members seek to speak with a common voice, deliver consistent messages and facilitate bottom-up approaches in the implementation of sustainable forest management.

2. Consistent with their commitment to support the Forum on Forests, several CPF members were substantively involved in two country-led initiatives: the Workshop on Forest Governance and Decentralization in Africa, held in Durban, South Africa, in April 2008, and the International Dialogue on Financing Sustainable Forest Management, held in Paramaribo in September 2008. In addition, the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) is arranging for the secondment of a senior staff member to the Forum secretariat in 2009.

II. Links to recent United Nations Forum on Forests resolutions and decisions

3. In 2007, at its seventh session, the Forum on Forests reached agreement on the landmark non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests (see General Assembly resolution 62/98, annex) and the multi-year programme of work of the Forum for the period 2007-2015. Both of those important outcomes identify key elements for future international forest policy and call for active support from CPF members.

4. The forest instrument, which builds on more than 15 years of negotiations on global forest policy, strengthens political commitment to sustainable forest management and provides a framework for international cooperation. It seeks to achieve the four global objectives on forests, sets out national policies and measures and further defines measures of international cooperation and means of implementation. Most of the actions called for relate to ongoing activities of CPF and its members, including with regard to criteria and indicators, scientific and technological innovation, public awareness, research and development, governance, national forest programmes, environmental impact assessments, threats to forest

[1] Membership of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests consists of the Centre for International Forestry Research, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Tropical Timber Organization, the International Union of Forest Research Organizations, the secretariat of the Global Environment Facility, the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, the World Agroforestry Centre, the World Bank and the World Conservation Union.

health, and protected areas. The instrument also identifies potential areas of future CPF collaboration, including traditional forest-related knowledge, incentive structures, the encouragement of investment by both the private sector and local communities and access to resources and markets in support of livelihoods.

5. In addition, Member States are called on to support the efforts of CPF to develop and implement joint initiatives. As members of the CPF governing bodies, they are also asked to help ensure that the respective forest-related priorities and programmes of each partner are integrated and mutually supportive.

6. The multi-year programme of work of the Forum on Forests sets out the themes and activities of the Forum for the period 2007-2015 and, in so doing, provides a number of opportunities for CPF and its members to contribute to the intergovernmental dialogue. The programme of work highlights the CPF initiative to streamline reporting and calls for further harmonization of monitoring, assessment and reporting. The Partnership is encouraged to develop synergies and explore possibilities for joint activities with a view to achieving sustainable forest management, the global objectives on forests and implementation of the forest instrument. The programme of work also invites CPF members to share information on their activities in support of the International Year of Forests in 2011.

7. To address the opportunities presented by the outcomes of the seventh session of the Forum on Forests and other forestry-related international agreements in 2007, the Partnership held a strategic dialogue, in Bonn in February 2008, at which members agreed on the need to advance forest finance and raise awareness of forests as a multivalue and multifunctional resource. With regard to climate change, CPF members noted the timely relevance of the adaptation and mitigation aspects of their mandates, strategies and programmes, as well as the need for further cooperation and coordination in that area. Members also agreed to work towards revitalizing their joint initiative on streamlining reporting, strengthening support for forest law enforcement and governance and promoting the effective use of science and technology in international forest-related processes.

III. Joint initiatives of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests

A. New initiatives

8. Since 2007, the Partnership has undertaken several new initiatives in support of the Forum on Forests.

Financing for sustainable forest management

9. In December 2007, the secretariat of the Forum on Forests invited five other members of CPF with extensive experience in forest finance (the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), ITTO, the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the World Bank) to form the Advisory Group on Finance.[2] Members of the Advisory Group were asked to provide technical expertise in the context of preparations for the eighth session of the Forum on Forests. As part of

[2] See http://www.fao.org/forestry/cpf-finance/en.

their contributions, FAO and the National Forest Programme Facility carried out a comprehensive update of the CPF Sourcebook on Funding for Sustainable Forest Management (see paras. 20 and 21 below).

10. The Advisory Group on Finance also commissioned a study entitled "Financing flows and needs to implement the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests",[3] which identifies financing needs, as well as sources and mechanisms for financing sustainable forest management. Findings were presented at a meeting of the Ad Hoc Expert Group of the Forum on Forests convened in November 2008 to develop proposals for a voluntary global financial mechanism/portfolio approach/framework.

11. The study provides an objective analysis of the funding sources and gaps related to implementing sustainable forest management and the forest instrument. It also shows that international financing arrangements for forests are rapidly evolving, partly targeting sustainable forest management and partly targeting efforts to enhance the contribution of forests to climate change mitigation and the conservation of biological diversity. The study further points out that current funding for the implementation of sustainable forest management and the forest instrument is inadequate. In this regard, it invites the international community to consider whether a new instrument or mechanism could be set up to increase financial resources in a systematic and predictable manner.

Strategic framework for forests and climate change

12. Since April 2008, all CPF members have been involved in developing the strategic framework for forests and climate change,[4] a document which proposes a coordinated forest-sector response to the global climate change agenda. It puts forward a case for the tactical role of sustainable forest management, including forest conservation, rehabilitation and restoration, in achieving long-term climate change mitigation. It also serves as a robust framework for effective adaptation and for combating forest degradation, drawing on the collective expertise of CPF members to deal with complex forest issues, such as forest law compliance, support to livelihoods and conservation in land-use planning.

13. The framework was launched in Poznan, Poland, during the fourteenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in December 2008. It conveys six key messages:

(a) Sustainable forest management provides an effective framework for forest-based climate change mitigation and adaptation;

(b) Forest-based climate change mitigation and adaptation measures should proceed concurrently;

(c) Intersectoral collaboration, economic incentives and the provision of alternative livelihoods are essential for reducing deforestation and forest degradation;

(d) Capacity-building and governance reforms are urgently require;

[3] Available at http://www.un.org/esa/forests/pdf/aheg/finance/AGF_Financing_Study.pdf.

[4] Available at: http://www.fao.org/forestry/cpf-climatechange.

(e) Accurate forest monitoring and assessment helps informed decision-making but requires greater coordination at all levels;

(f) CPF members are committed to a collaborative and comprehensive approach to forest-based climate change mitigation and adaptation.

14. The strategic framework is aimed at facilitating preparations for the post-2012 climate regime and the development of any future Framework Convention mechanism to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries. It is also aimed at enhancing coordinated action and integration of climate change aspects into sustainable forest management in a cross-sectoral manner.

Expert panel on adaptation of forests to climate change

15. In 2007, the expert panel on adaptation of forests to climate change was established under the CPF joint initiative on science and technology (see para. 22 below). The select group of outstanding scientific experts carried out a comprehensive assessment of available scientific information on the adaptation of forests and forest-dependent people to climate change. The work of the panel is aimed at facilitating the development of appropriate responses to the impact of climate change on forests and trees, on the basis of state-of-the art knowledge.

16. Building on scientific literature and other relevant sources of information, including the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the panel reviewed current information concerning the link between forest ecosystems and climate and considered climate change impacts — both observed and projected — on forests and the people depending on them, as well as their vulnerabilities and options for adaptation in terms of management and policy. On the basis of the assessment, a policy brief has been prepared for the consideration of the Forum on Forests at its eighth session, and the full, peer-reviewed assessment report is scheduled for publication at that time.

Forest Day

17. In recent years, forests have featured prominently in discussions at meetings of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. To capitalize on this interest, the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), in collaboration with other CPF members, organized a Forest Day during the thirteenth and fourteenth meetings of the Conference of the Parties.[5] The theme of both events was "Shaping the global agenda for forests and climate change", and a range of forest-related issues central to the climate change debate were discussed: the role of forests in climate change mitigation and adaptation, including reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries; challenges related to monitoring and data; transaction and opportunity costs in forest and carbon markets; governance, including rights, law enforcement, poverty and livelihoods; and financial incentives, such as payments for ecosystem services. The two gatherings attracted more than 800 scientists, policymakers and representatives from intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

[5] See http://www.cifor.cgiar.org/Events/COP-ForestDay/Introduction.htm and http://www.cifor.cgiar.org/Events/COP14-ForestDay/forest_day2008.htm.

Joint initiative on forest degradation

18. As a follow-up to previous work on harmonizing forest definitions and streamlining forest-related reporting,[6] CPF undertook a new joint initiative to identify specific parameters and/or proxy indicators of forest degradation and degraded forests, as well as assessment and monitoring methods. The aim is to increase awareness of the many facets of forest degradation and to build country capacity to monitor, assess and report on them, especially given the prominence that the issue is now receiving in the international arena. A questionnaire was sent to countries and forest-related organizations asking them, inter alia, to provide the definition and parameters of forest degradation that they use; details on any assessments carried out at the national or local levels in that area; and information to help to identify potential case studies.

19. The initiative on forest degradation also builds on the review by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change of definitions and methodologies to assess emissions from forest degradation; the recent informal expert consultation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;[7] the activities of the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries; the event on forest degradation, led by ITTO, the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and FAO, held in connection with the second Forest Day; the work of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) on forest fragmentation and other biodiversity indicators for the 2010 biodiversity target; the FAO/UNEP/GEF project on land degradation assessment in drylands; and the Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration.

B. Ongoing initiatives

Sourcebook on Funding for Sustainable Forest Management

20. The CPF Sourcebook on Funding for Sustainable Forest Management[8] is an electronic database of more than 800 funding sources, 15 of which are related to climate change (carbon funds). Although its main aim is to assist countries and practitioners in locating funds for sustainable forest management projects, it was a key tool in assessing the availability of and gaps in funding to support national measures identified in the forest instrument. Information contained in the Sourcebook comes from development agencies, countries, CPF members, other international forest-related organizations and instruments, developments banks, the private sector, regional processes, foundations and international non-governmental organizations. It covers issues ranging from poverty alleviation, market access and forest certification systems to community-based forest management, small and medium-sized forest enterprises and forest governance.

21. The search system was restructured to improve accuracy and make it more user-friendly. In addition, the funding newsletter is now published every two months. The database was developed and is maintained by FAO, in collaboration with other CPF members and the National Forest Programme Facility.

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[6] See http://www.fao.org/forestry/43155/en.

[7] See http://www.unfccc.int/methods_science/redd/items/4579.php.

[8] See http://www.fao.org/forestry/cpf-sourcebook/en.

Global forest expert panels

22. A CPF initiative led by the International Union of First Research Organization (IUFRO), the global forest expert panels (formerly known as the joint initiative on science and technology) provide scientific expertise relating to forests and trees to meet the information needs of Governments and intergovernmental processes. The panels bring together internationally recognized experts to provide independent scientific assessments regarding issues of serious concern to policymakers and decision-makers. The assessment reports are prepared by thematic expert panels. The outputs of the panels include comprehensive, peer-reviewed reports, as well as summaries for policymakers.

23. Through timely reports on issues of major concern that reflect state-of-the-art understanding of the subject matter, the global forest expert panels respond to the needs of the Forum and other intergovernmental processes for sound scientific information. In this way, they support more informed decision-making at the global level and contribute to the achievement of international forest-related commitments and internationally agreed development goals. Although the current focus is on forests and adaptation to climate change through the expert panel on adaptation of forests to climate change (see paras. 15 and 16 above), potential future themes could include bioenergy, forest and water interactions, and landscape approaches.

Joint initiative on streamlining reporting

24. In the interest of reducing the reporting burden on countries and improving efficiency in national reporting, CPF members worked to streamline reporting requests, synchronize reporting cycles, harmonize data-collection methods, increase data comparability and compatibility, facilitate the accessibility and flow of information and strengthen national capacity. The CPF Task Force on Streamlining Forest-related Reporting created a portal[9] which helps users to find national reports on forests and other information of interest, including a reporting calendar and reporting guidelines. The site is maintained by FAO, in close collaboration with other members of the Task Force.

25. A number of CPF members have taken measures to reduce the reporting burden on countries: FAO, ITTO and the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity are coordinating their information-gathering activities, particularly in the context of the Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA). FRA 2010 is aimed at providing information on the major elements of sustainable forest management and thus at helping to monitor the achievement of the global objectives on forests, the forest instrument, the 2010 target of the Convention on Biological Diversity and other targets and objectives of ITTA, the Framework Convention on Climate Change and other processes. However, the demand for reporting appears to be growing, despite efforts to curtail additional requests. The secretariat of the Forum on Forests is in the process of preparing a concept note and recommendations in this regard, which is expected to be available in mid-2009.

[9] http://www.fao.org/forestry/cpf-mar/en.

Global forest information service

26. The Global Forest Information Service (GFIS) Internet portal[10] provides a single entry point for the dissemination and sharing of a wide range of forest-related data and information. The CPF joint initiative developed common information exchange standards and is building capacity and enhancing partnerships among providers and users of forestry information. GFIS is led by IUFRO, in collaboration with FAO, CIFOR, ITTO, the secretariat of the Forum on Forests, and the biological informatics office of the United States Geological Survey.

27. The GFIS gateway currently receives information from more than 130 partners around the world. Developments are constantly under way to help information providers promote their information resources. At present, GFIS includes a search tool and browsing capability for the latest news, events, publications and job opportunities. The Finnish Forest Research Institute is responsible for the technical development and maintenance of the GFIS gateway.

CPF website

28. The CPF website[11] disseminates and provides access to information on the Partnership and its activities, including the CPF Sourcebook on Funding for Sustainable Forest Management and the CPF portal on forest-related reporting. The website makes CPF publications available online, including the CPF brochure, policy documents, progress reports, statements and meeting reports. The site features links to the calendars of various events organized by CPF members and provides contact details for CPF member focal points. The secretariat of the Forum on Forests maintains the website, in close collaboration with FAO.

IV. Other collaborative activities

A. Improving forest governance and law enforcement

29. A number of CPF members are actively engaged in forest governance and law enforcement activities. The World Bank works with partners to facilitate Government discussions and secure commitments. FAO and ITTO work together to build capacity. IUCN works with a wide range of stakeholders through the global forest governance project, and CIFOR works with others to focus on social aspects of the issue.

30. Members have recognized that good governance is more a process than an end result and, while there are no concrete indicators of advancement, ongoing efforts and investments are reaping benefits in terms of improved forest management and positive changes to national policies. Good governance has also been recognized as key to an effective mechanism for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. Other issues of concern identified by members include sustainability versus legality; collaboration with relevant partners outside CPF; further engagement of local institutions and the private sector; and the rights of indigenous and local communities.

[10] http://www.gfis.net.

[11] http://www.fao.org/forestry/cpf/en.

B. Platform for research in forest landscape mosaics

31. The Biodiversity Platform of CIFOR and the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF)[12] focuses on multifunctionality in forest landscape mosaics — areas which support a range of forest, agricultural, livelihood and urban activities and are recognized for their high biodiversity value. Research, undertaken with multiple stakeholders and at different governance levels, focuses on the sustainable use of natural resources, biodiversity conservation and equitable benefit-sharing. The Platform seeks to generate synergies, promote dialogue and networking and provide opportunities for sharing lessons across disciplines, sites and scales. It is aimed at delivering public goods on forest landscape mosaics by examining relationships between biodiversity and livelihood security in multifunctional landscapes; ecological processes and the spatial dynamics of biodiversity in forest landscape mosaics; opportunities for and constraints on biodiversity conservation; sustainable use and equitable benefit-sharing; and the potential to harmonize customary and statutory rules and laws.

C. Monitoring, assessment and reporting

32. A number of CPF members are building capacity to improve monitoring, assessment and reporting at the national and regional levels. FAO, the Government of Japan, the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, ITTO and UNEP are currently engaged in assisting countries in developing a harmonized national forest monitoring, assessment and reporting system for the Asia and the Pacific region. National networks of focal points have been or are being established for various forest-related processes, conventions and agencies. The initiative also provides training to harmonize remote sensing-based forest classification, build skills for two- and three-dimensional data visualization, develop indicators on forest degradation, deforestation and fragmentation and standardize information management related to national forest inventories and assessments.

D. Forest landscape restoration and rehabilitation of degraded lands

33. CPF members actively participate in the Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration[13] to assess the contributions of forest landscape restoration to the implementation of international and regional laws and agreements, conducting case studies and holding workshops.

34. The Partnership is continuing to build its learning network, expand publicity efforts and reinforce legal, policy and institutional frameworks to support forest landscape restoration. In 2007, IUFRO convened an International Conference on Forest Landscape Restoration to examine the scientific basis of the concept and its linkages to practice and policy. In 2008, IUCN convened an international workshop on the theme "forest landscape restoration and the linkage to climate change", in Miyun county, China, to share information on forest landscape restoration, watershed management and the relationship between forests and climate change.

[12] http://www.cifor.cgiar.org/Research/ENV/Themes/Bio/biodiversity_platform.htm.

[13] See http://www.unep-wcmc.org/forest/restoration/globalpartnership.

E. Public communication and outreach

35. In 2008, the secretariat of the Forum on Forests worked in partnership with UNEP and FAO to develop the first edition of *Vital Forest Graphics*, which provides a visual overview of the state of the world's forests in the form of graphics, maps and other illustrations. The publication is based on case studies on topical forest issues by a diverse group of authors and is slated for print in 2009.

36. ICRAF, the World Bank, IUCN and ITTO further enhance communication with external partners as members of the steering committee of the Forests Dialogue, a platform led by civil society for ongoing multi-stakeholder discussions on global forestry issues.[14] In addition, CPF drew on the Forest Dialogue's Statement on Forests and Climate Change when it developed its strategic framework for a coordinated forest sector response to emerging issues in this area.

F. Forestry education synthesis and strategy

37. In 2007, ICRAF, in collaboration with the African Network for Agriculture, Agroforestry and Natural Resources Education, FAO, IUFRO, ITTO and the International Partnership for Forestry Education, hosted the first global forestry education workshop, attracting 90 participants from 29 countries. The rich presentations and strategies developed were captured in a book, produced and shared in 2008, entitled *New Perspectives in Forestry Education*.[15] A policy brief was also produced, entitled "Future forestry education", which will guide policy and education managers on actions to transform forestry education to fit current and future needs.

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[14] See http://research.yale.edu/gisf/tfd.

[15] Available at http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/af1/downloads/publications/PDFs/B15713.PDF.

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Multi-stakeholder dialogue

Multi-stakeholder dialogue

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

From its inception, the United Nations Forum on Forests has been highly participatory in its outlook. Participation by major groups in Forum sessions and related meetings has been recognized as a key element in ensuring stakeholder involvement in forest decision-making processes. At the same time, United Nations Forum on Forests resolutions and decisions have recognized the vital role of stakeholders in the implementation of sustainable forest management. At its seventh session, the Forum adopted the landmark, non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and the multi-year programme of work of the Forum for the period 2007-2015, both of which call for active and effective participation by major groups in the future work of the Forum and in support of the International Year of Forests in 2011.

The present note gives an account of relevant developments since the seventh session of the Forum and offers a number of measures the Forum may wish to consider in order to continue enhancing substantive contributions by major groups to its discussions.

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I. Introduction

1. The present note has been prepared to facilitate the multi-stakeholder dialogue at the eighth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests. Discussion papers prepared by the major groups and delivered through their focal points are contained in addenda to the present note.

2. Since its inception, the Forum has recognized the important contributions of major groups, as identified in Agenda 21, in implementing sustainable forest management, and has worked towards enhancing stakeholder participation in its work. At its seventh session, the Forum adopted the landmark, non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests (forest instrument)[1] and the multi-year programme of work of the United Nations Forum on Forests for the period 2007-2015,[2] both of which call for active and effective participation by major groups in the future work of the Forum and in support of the International Year of Forests in 2011.

3. In 2008, representatives of major groups actively participated in two country-led Forum initiatives held in Durban, South Africa (April 2008) and Paramaribo (September 2008) and in the Forum ad hoc expert group meeting convened to develop proposals for the voluntary global financial mechanism/portfolio approach/forest financing framework in Vienna (November 2008).

4. Pursuant to United Nations Forum on Forests resolution 7/1, a multi-stakeholder dialogue is held as a common item of every Forum session. In order to facilitate the multi-stakeholder dialogue process, major group networks have nominated focal points to assist in coordination of inputs from various major group networks. During intersessional periods, the Forum secretariat works in close collaboration and cooperation with major group focal points to coordinate and plan for the next multi-stakeholder dialogue and discuss other Forum-related issues.

5. The Forum secretariat also works closely with major group focal points to enhance participation in accordance with the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council.

II. Enhancing stakeholder participation in the future work of the Forum

6. The non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests has multiple references calling for participation of stakeholders in implementing sustainable forest management. In the forest instrument, in the section on national policies and measures, Member States committed themselves to create enabling environments to encourage investment and involvement of stakeholders through policies, incentives and regulations;[3] to establish or strengthen partnerships;[4] to promote active and effective participation by major groups in development, implementation and assessment of forest-related national policies, measures and programmes;[5] to promote development and application of scientific and technological innovations for

[1] E/2007/42, para. 1; General Assembly resolution 62/98, annex.
[2] E/2007/42, para. 3.
[3] General Assembly resolution 62/98, para. 6 (h).
[4] Ibid., para. 6 (m).
[5] Ibid., para. 6 (w).

use by forest owners and local and indigenous communities;[6] to support education, training and extension programmes involving stakeholders;[7] and enhance access to forest resources and relevant markets in order to support livelihoods of stakeholders.[8] In the section on international cooperation and means of implementation, the forest instrument contains a call for enhanced access to environmentally sound and innovative technologies for the benefit of local and indigenous communities;[9] enhanced capacity of research organizations to generate and have access to forest-related data[10] and strengthened cooperation and partnerships at the regional and subregional levels.[11]

7. The multi-year programme of work states that each session of the Forum will: provide a platform for dialogue with representatives of major groups and other relevant stakeholders; will further encourage partnerships involving multi-stakeholders; will encourage major groups and other forest stakeholders to contribute and actively participate in Forum discussions and that major groups and other stakeholders are invited to share information on their activities in support of the International Year of Forests.

8. Taking that renewed mandate into account, the Forum may wish to consider ways to enhance direct and substantive involvement of international organizations and major groups in its work. Major groups associations and networks play a vital role in enabling major groups to work effectively with the Forum, given limited financial resources and time. While some groups already have well-established networks which enable effective exchange of experiences and have facilitated the development of a common "group" perspective, there is still room for improvement in that area. To date, the Forum secretariat has been unable to effectively engage the local authorities' major group because of the absence of a suitable network.

9. Representatives of major groups have contributed significantly to the work of the country-led initiatives and to the ad hoc expert group meeting convened in 2008. Their proposals and comments were submitted for discussion in an open and participatory manner alongside those of other experts. Such a practice should be continued in the future, including during the intersessional activities of the Forum. In addition, the positive experience gained from such expert group meetings and past sessions could be used in considering the participation of major groups at future sessions.

10. Major groups have convened several successful organization-led initiatives to contribute substantively to discussions on such issues as the root causes of deforestation, traditional forest-related knowledge and the gender aspects of sustainable forest management. At the United Nations Forum on Forests ad hoc expert group meeting convened in Vienna in November 2008, major groups announced their intent to organize a major groups initiative in late 2009 on the roles of civil society actors and the means of their engagement with the Forum and the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, as an input to the ninth session of the Forum. Given that such initiatives have provided the opportunity to

[6] Ibid., para. 6 (s).
[7] Ibid., para. 6 (v).
[8] Ibid., para. 6 (y).
[9] Ibid., para. 7 (k).
[10] Ibid., para. 7 (c).
[11] Ibid., para. 7 (q).

consider in-depth analyses, positive experiences and challenges from a major groups perspective, Member States may wish to support such initiatives in the future.

III. Multi-stakeholder dialogue at the eighth session of the Forum

11. Pursuant to its resolution 7/1, the Forum holds a multi-stakeholder dialogue at every session. The Forum secretariat facilitates consultations with the focal points of each major group to plan and prepare for the multi-stakeholder dialogue. The active engagement of stakeholders in the dialogue process is particularly important in ensuring that the discussions at the eighth session reflect a wide range of perspectives and concerns. Given the critical importance of the issues on the agenda of the eighth session of the Forum, and the fact that major groups are an integral part of implementation, their participation in discussions can ensure a greater sense of ownership of the outcomes of the eighth session of the Forum and eventually more effective action on the ground.

12. Based on the positive feedback received on the multi-stakeholder dialogue at the seventh session, it is proposed that the multi-stakeholder dialogue at the eighth session be split into two segments over the two-week session. In the lead-up to the seventh session, it was felt that having a dialogue segment in the second week of the session gave major group representatives an opportunity to discuss issues being raised in the ongoing negotiations.

13. During those dialogue segments, major group representatives will present their priority areas and recommendations set out in their discussion papers, as well as their views on the two main thematic areas of discussion: forests in a changing environment and means of implementation. Major group representatives will continue to be invited to present their views and comments throughout the discussions at the eighth session of the Forum at the discretion of the chair and presiding vice-chairs.

IV. Points for discussion

14. **Member States may wish to consider:**

(a) **Continuing stakeholder involvement in intersessional activities of the Forum in an open and participatory manner;**

(b) **Seeking ways to further improve participatory practices and mainstreaming major groups perspectives into discussions at Forum sessions and related meetings;**

(c) **Supporting the major groups initiative on the roles of civil society actors and the means of their engagement with the Forum and the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests;**

(d) **Examining ways to encourage participation of those major groups that have so far not been involved with the Forum's work.**